
The Study of the Voice.

BY CHRISTINE NILSSON.

[From an article in *The Ladies' Home Journal*, by this distinguished singer, THE CANADIAN MUSICIAN quotes the following paragraphs.]

It has been said on presumably competent authority that the teacher of singing to young ladies ought always to be a woman. This is a mistake. To say nothing of the famous Professor Garcia, who trained the voice of Malibran, Jenny Lind and Madame Pauline Viardot, we have only to recall, in later years, the elder Lamperti, who among scores of less famous pupils, taught Madames Sembrich and Albani, while Madame Adelina Patti, in her early youth, took lessons from her half-brother, Signor Barili, and later from Strakosch; and I myself had for a teacher M. Wartel, of Paris. In fact, it is a noticeable peculiarity that men succeed best in teaching singing to women and women to men.

It is an essential feature in the cultivation of a young girl's voice that her lessons should not be begun too early. Her constitution must be formed, and nature herself must have announced the moment of physical maturity. Not before the age of fourteen should she begin her studies of vocalization. She should, however, be taught music as soon as her inclination and her temperament will allow. Eight years of age is by no means too early for the young student to begin to learn to play on the piano or upon the violin. The latter instrument has often been found an invaluable introducer to the study of singing. It trains the ear and develops taste and correctness of intonation. Before it was discovered that I had a voice, I went through, in my childhood, a series of lessons on the violin, for I was originally intended to become a violinist. And I have found that early training of the greatest advantage to me in my subsequent career.

One point that can not be too strongly impressed on the young girl student is the necessity of never singing too long at a time. This precaution it is essential for her to observe throughout the whole period of her studies. She may begin the day with a lesson of half an hour; then for two or three hours she must abstain from singing. She may practice instrumental music in the interval, she may take exercise in the house, but not in the open air, or she may interest herself in her studies of French or of Italian. Then she may sing again for another half hour, to be followed by a second period of thorough repose for the voice. A third half hour, or at most a fourth, should conclude the vocal exercises of the day. One hears, sometimes, professional singers that devote eight hours a day to their studies. This is altogether incorrect. Any voice submitted to such an ordeal would be worn out very speedily. The greatest care is necessary to avoid any relaxations of the vocal chords, a result that is sure to follow upon overfatigue of the throat. And when once it becomes chronic the mischief is irremediable. Such statements usually originate not with the singers themselves—they know better than that—but with persons who write about the study of singing without any practical knowledge of the matter.